

THE PORTLAND BALLET

NANCY DAVIS & ANNE MUELLER ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

CONTACT: Cynthia Kirk
cynkirk@syntaxpdx.com
503.330.1886

Queen Ascends Throne as The Portland Ballet Dances Portland Premiere of Trey McIntyre's *Mercury Half-Life* (Highlights)

May 6-7 Program Includes Premieres by Gregg Bielemeier and Jason Davis, Balanchine's *Valse-Fantaisie*, Petipa's *Raymonda Suite*, and a Tip O' the Hat to Pianist Robert Huffman

TPB Featured on OPB-TV's "Oregon Art Beat," 8 PM April 14/ 6 PM April 17

Praise for *Mercury Half-Life*

What fun! And what craftsmanship....Avoids camp and takes the music as exalted. Deployment of classical vocabulary fully matches the wattage of the electric guitars. -- Brian Siebert, New York Times

THE PORTLAND BALLET's Spring Concert 2016, with
Portland Premiere of

Trey McIntyre's *Mercury Half-Life* (Highlights), Queen (2013)

World Premieres of

Gregg Bielemeier's *Separate Times (Similar To But Different Than)*, original score by
Jeremy Reinhold (2016)

Jason Davis' *Ochos Niñas en Rojo* (2016), fandangos by the San Francisco Guitar
Quartet

George Balanchine's *Valse-Fantaisie*, Glinka (1967)

Anne Mueller after Marius Petipa's *Raymonda Suite*, Glazunov (1898)

Jason Davis' *Simplicity*, Chopin (2012)

F/Sa, May 6-7, 7:30 PM

Lincoln Hall, 1620 SW Park at Market

Runtime: 80 minutes w/intermission

Reserved seats: \$5-\$10-\$15, under 18; \$10-\$25-\$35, adults

theportlandballet.org or 503.452.8448

Limited Arts Card and Arts for All tickets

On Friday/Saturday, May 6-7 at Lincoln Hall in downtown Portland, more than 40 dancers of **THE PORTLAND BALLET** present a diverse and exciting program of six works, ranging from contemporary to iconically classical; with music from Chopin to Queen; international influences from Hungary to England, Russia, Poland and Spain. The program represents an impressive range of choreographic styles with technical and artistic challenges that showcase the dancers' superb training and performance polish.

The Portland Premiere of *Mercury Half-Life* (Highlights), with music by Queen, came to TPB because of the strong relationship between Co-Artistic Director Anne Mueller and choreographer Trey McIntyre. They worked together at Oregon Ballet Theatre, when McIntyre was resident choreographer and Mueller, a dancer. She was one of three co-founders of Trey McIntyre Project and served as company artist and managing director. The Portland connection deepens with the artistry of Melissa Schlachtmeyer

(1973-2014), who was on the Reed College theater faculty when she designed *Mercury Half-Life*'s bold, glitter-free costumes.

Queen's insistent 80s rock beat may be unmistakable but *Mercury Half-Life*'s moves are far trickier than any club or living room groove. TPB's production marks the third time Mueller has set the piece. Last fall, she spent a week with The Washington Ballet, preparing a performance that coincides, in part (May 4-15), with TPB's. THE PORTLAND BALLET dancers will experience the thrill of working with the choreographer himself, when Trey McIntyre travels to Portland to lead rehearsals, April 7-9.

THE PORTLAND BALLET has a reputation not only for the professionalism of its performances but also for giving dancers and choreographers the opportunity to collaborate on the creation of new work. TPB's list of commissions is nearly equal to its repertoire of work by renowned choreographers such as George Balanchine, Marius Petipa, Frederick Ashton, Michel Fokine and August Bournonville. That tradition is evident in the Spring Concert's debut of work by Gregg Bielemeier and Jason Davis.

Well known dance artist Bielemeier's *Separate Times (Similar To but Different Than)* refers to the challenge, not just in steps but more fundamentally in mind set, in dancing contemporary choreography for those steeped in ballet technique. He charged the piece's 21 dancers, "I want you to do everything the way you haven't done it," the goal being to pique the audience's curiosity with the unexpected. Adding additional texture to the piece is Jeremy Reinhold's original, improvised piano music, incorporating laughter, singing and other human voicing from the rehearsal studio.

If a mixed rep program may be likened to a tasty repast of many courses, Jason Davis' *Ocho Niñas en Rojo is tapas*: quick, bright, Spanish-inflected. Davis, TPB Academy Principal, observes that ballet, like much of classical music, has roots in folk traditions. He wanted to create a character piece and the San Francisco Guitar Quartet's "Black Opal" CD became his fandango inspiration. The eight-girl ensemble will wear the heels associated with flamenco but *Ocho Niñas en Rojo* is seasoned with just a pinch of *pimente*, distancing it from the literal.

Davis' *Simplicity* was added to the May program with pianist Robert Huffman in mind. Beloved member of the TPB faculty since its founding in 2001 until his death in January, Huffman was well known for enlivening class not just with his encyclopedic musical knowledge but also with his cultivated quips, ready laughter and enthusiastic encouragement. In 2012, Huffman persuaded Davis to create a piece to piano music by Chopin, his favorite composer, as performed by William Kapell, his favorite interpreter. Just as the "simplicity" of solo piano belies the sophistication of Chopin's music, Davis' work for a corps of 13 girls in long, flowing gowns makes the complex look easy.

George Balanchine's choreography is synonymous with "neo-classicism" or non-narrative ballet. His *Valse-Fantaisie* perfectly sums up that aesthetic in what, *New York Times* dance critic Anna Kisselgoff called,

A whirlwind pattern of pure dancing, attuned to the joyfulness of its waltz rhythms.

This study in rapid-fire intricacy was set on TPB's dancers by Artistic Advisor John Clifford, a Balanchine protégé, dancer and choreographer with his company, New York City Ballet, from 1966-1974.

At the other end of the ballet scale, Marius Petipa's *Raymonda* epitomizes the romanticism of classical ballet. It's a story of royal love, challenged and triumphant, against Glazunov's soaring, lush music. Set in Hungary, it offers the dancers a wealth of national variations in which to display their technique and the joy of dance For TPB's Spring Concert 2016, Anne Mueller has created a *Raymonda Suite* with a corps of 12 female dancers (rather than the traditional four couples) that focuses on the most bravura variations including the grand opening and the rousing coda of the wedding celebration.

THE PORTLAND BALLET nurtures young dancers from age three to 22. TPB students are trained with professional intent by a faculty that includes some of the nation's finest dancers and choreographers, with experience at companies such as the National Ballet, the original Los Angeles Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Royal Danish Ballet, Trey McIntyre Project and BodyVox. Professionally produced performance experience is at the core of TPB training and TPB is well known for its annual Thanksgiving Weekend production. TPB graduates have gone on to professional dance careers with companies such as Grand Rapids Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Nevada Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Sacramento Ballet, Houston Ballet, St. Louis Ballet, Royal Swedish Ballet, Batsheva, LEV, Ballet Memphis and Ballet West.

Creative Credits

(Performance order)

Raymonda Suite (1898)
Music: Alexander Glazunov
Choreography: Anne Mueller after
Marius Petipa
Staging: Anne Mueller and Nancy Davis
Rehearsal Assistants: Nancy Davis and
Elizabeth Guerin
Costumes: Wendy Mathews and
Mary Muhlbach
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Separate Times (Similar to but Different
Than) (World Premiere, 2016)
Music: Jeremy Reinhold
Choreography: Gregg Bielemeier
Staging: Gregg Bielemeier
Costumes: Gregg Bielemeier
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Ocho Niñas en Rojo (World Premiere, 2016)
Music: Fandangos from "Black Opal,"
San Francisco Guitar Quartet
Choreography: Jason Davis
Costumes: Courtesy of Arts &
Communication Magnet Academy
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Valse-Fantaisie (1967)
Music: Mikhail Glinka
Choreography: George Balanchine
Staging: John Clifford
Rehearsal Assistants: Nancy Davis and
Anne Mueller
Costumes: Mary Muhlbach
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Simplicity (2012)
Music: Frederic Chopin
Choreography: by Jason Davis
Costumes: Gretta Wear, Patricia Brewer-
Jones, Carol Schults
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola

Mercury Half- Life (Highlights) (2013)
Music: Queen
Choreography: Trey McIntyre
Staging: Anne Mueller
Costume Design: Melissa Schlachtmeyer
Costume Construction: Mary Muhlbach
Lighting Design: Michael Mazzola